

MISSING!

Thousands of children run away, are abducted, kidnapped, or simply disappear each year. Education and prevention are the best ways to protect our families.

- More than two million children are reported missing each year in the United States.
 - Of this number, half are runaways.
 - 150,000 children are kidnapped by divorced or separated parents.
 - 50,000 are abducted by strangers.

All missing children are hurt in some way by the experience. Runaways may fall victim to pornographers, be forced into prostitution or drug use, or "sold" in illegal adoptions.

Children taken by a parent at least have a chance to go to school, grow up, and lead normal lives. But they are marked by their experience — especially if they are told the other parent doesn't love them anymore, doesn't ever want to see them again, or has died.

Children abducted by strangers are usually in the greatest danger because few survive the first few days of their disappearance.

Even the children who are found and reunited with their parents may be scarred by the experience. They often need professional help to heal psychological wounds.

The loss of a child can happen in any family. Kidnapping happens more often in families where parents have separated and are fighting over the custody of the children, but it also happens to caring and concerned parents. Police and social service workers say some places are especially dangerous for abductions: carnivals, fairs, shopping malls, parking lots. But children are abducted even from "safe" places — yards, neighborhood

parks, schools.

Concerned parents across the country are taking action as individuals and as groups to address the problem. They are working at state and national levels to pass legislation to protect children from abduction and to penalize abductors. In local communities parents are establishing educational programs for parents, children, and professionals.

The first line of defense against abduction is **education**. The second is **communication**. Parents are the primary teachers of children, and are responsible for showing them how to survive and how to cope with life. Therefore, the first thing parents can do to protect their children is teach them to protect themselves.

The following articles will discuss what parents can teach their children to help protect them from abduction, what parents can do themselves to reduce the danger of an abduction, what steps to take if a child is missing, how to prevent runaways, the pros and cons of fingerprinting. A list of resources and organizations that can help find missing children is also included.

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What to teach your child to protect against abduction

By Richard Venjohn

It is much easier to prevent an abduction than to find a missing child. Although you do not want to frighten your youngster, you do want to impart an awareness of possible dangers and help him develop the skills to deal with them in the real world. Here are some suggestions for parents from police and child search organizations on what to teach a child to help protect him from abduction.

- **Make sure he knows his full name, address, and telephone number (including area code).** Many missing children are very young. Once separated from their parents, they become confused and disoriented. If they know their full name, address, and telephone number, someone can help them find you.

- **Teach him how to make a long distance telephone call.** Abducted children are usually taken far from home. Unless a child knows how to make a long distance telephone call, he is alone in a foreign world. Every child should know how to dial "0" and ask the operator for help, and how to use the "911" emergency number.

- **Warn him never to get into a car without parental permission.** A common abduction technique is to lure a child into a car and speed away. Remind your child that adults rarely ask youngsters for directions. If someone should stop to ask directions or offer a ride or candy or some other treat, the child should know not to go near the car.

- **Teach him who "strangers" are.** Many children are very open and trusting and interact openly with anyone. Unfortunately, not everyone treats them with sensitivity and respect. Chil-

dren do need to develop a basic sense of trust and a positive attitude about their world, but they also need to understand that some strangers may want to harm them.

- **Instruct him not to tell a telephone caller he is home alone.** Teach him to say, "Daddy can't come to the phone right now. Can I take a message?"

- **Tell him not to open the door when he is home alone.** Regardless of his surroundings, a child is more vulnerable alone than with others and should know never to open the door to anyone if he is home alone. He should also know how to call a neighbor or the police for help if someone tries to break into the house.

'What if?' game teaches safety precautions

One effective — and fun — way to teach young children safety precautions is to play the "What If?" game.

Parent: "What if a lady you didn't know came to the playground and said, 'Danny, your mother has been in a terrible accident and she sent me to take you to the hospital to see her?'"

Child (who has been told never to go anywhere with a stranger): "She knows me?"

Parent: "She calls you Danny."

Child: "I guess maybe I should go with her if she knows me."

Parent: "What if she read your name off your baseball mitt?"

Child: "I know! I never go anywhere with someone I don't know!"

"What if?" can be used to problem-solve, to talk about frightening things, and to teach a child how to handle situations that are potentially dangerous. Other questions to ask to get you started are:

"What if someone comes to the door when I'm not here?"

"What if you can't find me in the store?"

"What if someone — stranger or not — touches you in your private places?"

"What if a man tells you his cat just had kittens and if you'll get in his car he'll take you to see them?"

"What if the babysitter says you can stay up late if you'll take off your clothes and let her take pictures of you?"

"What if someone took you to a strange place and left you there all alone?"

Try not to respond in terms of "right" or "wrong" answers. Instead, say: "It might be better if you said . . ." Remember, this is education, but it also needs to be fun and non-threatening. With very young children it may help if you act out a situation.

- **Require that he always ask for parental permission before going into anyone's house.** Knowing where a child is decreases the chances he will disappear from sight. It also gives parents an opportunity to control the child's activities and protect him from potential abuse.

- **Stress that no one has the right to touch him or make him feel uncomfortable.** Children should know that they have the right to say "no." If something does happen, the child should not be punished, made to feel it is his fault, or made to feel guilty or ashamed. He should be aware of his rights and of his parents' support and acceptance.

- **Encourage him to tell his parents when any adult asks him to keep a "secret."** Special ties with adults are very important to children. One of these special ties is "secrets." Children may be asked to keep a relationship with an adult a secret — but it may be a secret that can cover the tracks of an abduction. Young children, especially, should be encouraged to share these "secrets" with their parents.

- **Instruct him to tell parents if someone offers him gifts or money, or wants to take his picture.** Children love adult attention. When this attention is combined with gifts it is hard to

resist. Parents need to know about these overtures so they can evaluate the gestures.

- **Preach safety in numbers philosophy.** Teach your child to go places in twos, to avoid abandoned buildings and vacant lots, and to come home at dark.

- **Outline what he should do when he can't find you in the store.** Teach your child never to leave the place he is (grocery store, department store, ball park) without you, because you will never go home without him. Also, teach him that mom and dad have first names, that policemen are his friends, and how to listen for his name on a loudspeaker or intercom system.



Why children run away

Young children usually run away for one of three reasons:

- They are angry over something (an "unfair" punishment).
- They need more attention.
- They have unrealistic or imagined fears (a new stepparent will be mean, everyone at school hates them).

They usually only plan to be away an hour or two. Their intent is often to make the parents "sorry." Unfortunately, sometimes children wander too far and become lost or are abducted.

How you can prevent runaways

The National Youth Alliance suggests these steps for preventing young children from running away:

- Do not talk about running away in particular, lest you give the child ideas. Instead, explain how dangerous it is to be away from home alone.
- Teach your child what to do if he does get lost.
- Do not ignore or take lightly a runaway threat. Talk it through.
- Monitor a child's whereabouts immediately after a bad spat or a runaway threat.
- Don't threaten punishment for running away. This might make the child afraid to come home.
- Work hard at establishing good communication with your child. Encourage him to share whatever he may be scared about.
- Anticipate fears or events that may cause a runaway episode. Talk to the child about them. Assess anxiety levels. Assure the child of your continuing love and protection.

Information on older runaways (preteen and teenage) is also available from the National Youth Work Alliance, 1346 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

What parents can do to keep children safe

By Richard Venjohn

Parents can "teach themselves" some procedures that might help protect their children from abduction.

- **Know your child's friends.**

Being able to pinpoint where and with whom your child spends her time may be crucial in an emergency. It can give you a point from which to begin the search for your child and cut the time it takes to find her.

- **Know where your child is at all times.**

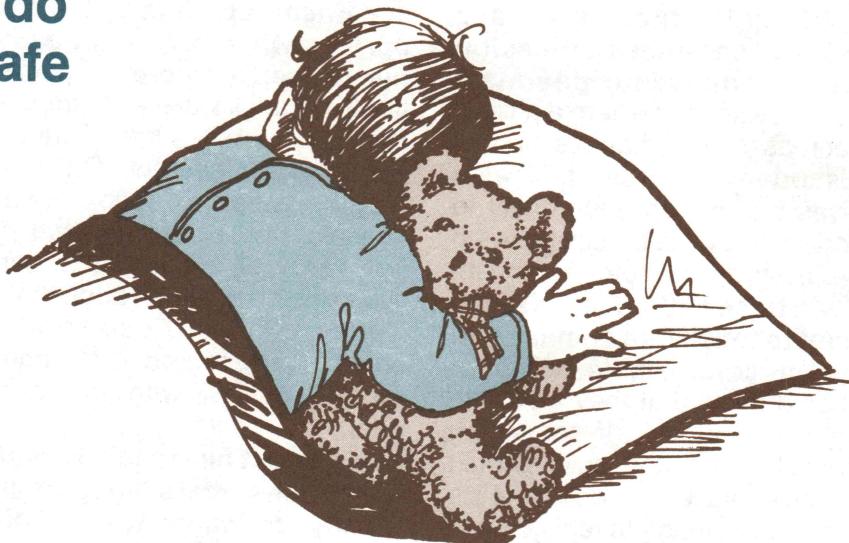
Very young children are especially vulnerable to abduction. Do not leave a child unattended in a car, yard, store, or other public place. Until children are old enough to defend themselves and avoid dangerous situations, parents should be sensitive to their vulnerability.

- **Be involved in your child's activities.** Your active participation in your child's world not only shows your interest and support, it also allows you the opportunity to know what she does with her time. This information may be important in an effort to find her.

- **Listen when your child tells you she does not want to be with someone.** Children's likes and dislikes are usually based upon their experience. When they say they don't like someone or some activity, there is usually a reason and parents should investigate.

- **Be sensitive to changes in a child's behavior or attitude.** There is probably a reason for the change. Encourage open communication and do not belittle any fear or concern your child may express to you.

Knowing your child is the first step in identifying changes in her moods or behavior. A child who has been approached or abused



may feel anxious or guilty. She may avoid certain individuals and activities. If you treat her with respect and support when she shares her feelings, she will be more likely to tell you about her problems.

- **Make clear to your child where she may go and with whom.** If you want your child to avoid certain homes or neighborhoods or not ride with certain individuals or strangers, you have to be very specific and very clear in your directions. Children who understand the rules are more likely to follow them.

- **Notice when someone shows your child a great deal of attention and find out why.** Children easily attract the attention of adults, and many adults enjoy casual interaction with children. However, an adult's attention can also be the first step in an abduction attempt. When an adult initiates contact with your child, find out why the adult is interested.

- **Have identification materials ready.** These include fingerprints (see accompanying story), dental records, and a recent full-body photograph.

Identification of a missing child is one of the most difficult tasks for authorities. Fingerprints, dental records, and recent pictures help them separate your child

from the other children they find in their investigations.

- **Formulate an emergency plan and family code word.** An emergency plan and a family code word agreed on beforehand not only create a united effort, they also offer structure and direction in emotionally tense and potentially chaotic situations.

The emergency plan should describe in simple terms what you will do and what you want your child to do if she is abducted. The plan would describe your efforts to find her (contacting the police, friends, neighbors) and her efforts to reach you (calling you or a 911 number, approaching a mother with children for help, screaming for help in a public place). A clear and simple plan will reassure your child that you will keep trying to find her and that she should keep trying to contact you.

- **A family code word identifies friends.** If a person does not know the family word, the child will know not to go with him or her.

- **Be discreet.** Use caution when attaching a child's name to clothing, books, or possessions. A visible name puts a potential abductor on a first-name basis with a child.

Fingerprinting for identification

Fingerprints are a person's most unique identifying mark, and can often be used to identify "found" children.

Fingerprinting of children for purposes of identification has met with some resistance in recent years, because of worries over invasion of privacy if police make or keep the prints.

Many professionals feel, however, that it can't hurt to fingerprint a child, and it might help if the child is lost or abducted. Fingerprinting provides a positive, personal record of the child's identity, promotes parental and community awareness of the problem of missing children, and gives parents a good opportunity to discuss personal safety with their children.



Many schools and communities are organizing and participating in fingerprinting programs. Parents who are concerned about civil rights can ask that the prints be given to them for safekeeping. Alternately, you can make your own print chart with an ordinary stamp pad, or there are a number of ready-made fingerprint kits on the market. **Growing Child** offers such a kit — **Protect With A Print** —

which includes fingerprint record cards and a non-toxic inkless printing pad. (Order #JHZ75, \$6 plus \$2 postage and handling.)

Experts recommend that you keep prints in a safe place along with a recent full-body photo of the child, a description that includes information on any scars

or identifying marks, a complete medical history, and the names, addresses, and phone numbers of any dentists who have treated the child. Prints of preschool children may not be very distinct, so they should be re-printed each year until the child reaches school age.

Parental abduction precautions

By Lynn Holland

Seventy percent of missing children are taken by a parent. If you are separated or divorced and there are disagreements, anger or bitterness between the two of you or erratic behavior, threats of abduction, or physical violence from your ex-spouse, you may want to take some or all of the following precautions.

- **Obtain legal custody.** If no legal custody has been determined, the left-behind parent has no legal recourse. Specify visitation arrangements precisely.

- **Keep current information.** Know your ex-spouse's Social Security number, date of birth, employment record, driver's license number, credit information, financial records, and vehicle identifications. Keep a current list of your ex-spouse's friends and relatives and their addresses, telephone numbers, and vehicle identifications.

- **Get a passport for the child** and notify the passport office that the child is not to be taken out of the country without your written permission. A person can have only one passport and it will be difficult and suspect for your ex-spouse to try to get the child another one.

- **Investigate court ordered deterrents.** If there have been threats of abduction, non-custodial parents can be required to post a bond that will be

forfeited if the child is abducted. The non-custodial parent can also be required to obtain court permission before leaving the area.

- **Alert caregivers, schools.** Take a copy of your custody order and a photo of the other parent to the caregiver or school and explain exactly who is allowed to take the child.

- **General precautions.** Teach your child the general precautions — full name and address, how to make a telephone call.

If your child is abducted by his or her other parent, follow the procedures outlined in the article "What to do when your child is missing."

Additional resources:
Interstate Child Custody Disputes and Parental Kidnapping: Monograph on Policy, Practices, and Law. Available for \$35 from:

Child Custody Project
American Bar Association
1800 M. Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20036

How to Deal with a Parental Kidnapping. A resource book compiled by Margaret Strickland. Available for \$17 (hardback) or \$14 (paperback) from:
Rainbow Books
P.O. Box 1069
Moore Haven, Florida 33471

What to do when a child is missing

By Richard Venjohn

If you think your child is missing, do not panic. Your family emergency plan should be guiding your actions. In addition:

- **Report the child missing as soon as possible.** The first 24 hours are crucial in an investigation of a missing child. The sooner you report the child missing, the fresher the trail and the closer the child.

Contact the local police first. Many police forces are sensitive to this problem and have established special procedures and trained personnel to work with this problem. However, some local police forces will not act until the child has been missing 24 hours.

If this happens to you, contact the closest FBI office and ask for help. The federal **Missing Child Act** lets the description of missing children be entered into the FBI's National Crime Information Center computer for dissemination to police departments around the country. The **Federal Kidnapping Prevention Act** empowers the Federal Parental Locator Service to help in the search for abducting parents and the children they have taken for the purpose of making or enforcing child custody decisions or prosecuting parental kidnapping cases.

To help the authorities in their search, be ready to give them a list of your child's habits, friends, special abilities and handicaps, distinguishing marks and traits, clothing, interests, a recent full-body photograph, the child's fingerprints, a sample of the child's hair and the child's dental records.

- **Contact the local media.** Spreading the word about your child's disappearance increases the chances someone will see her. The local radio and televi-

sion stations and the newspaper can quickly reach many people. Do not advertise your address and telephone number, however; ask people to contact the police. This will help avoid extortion threats and facilitate the police search.

- **Contact a private investigator.** Missing children are police business. However, if initial efforts of the law enforcement agencies are unsuccessful and you can afford it, hiring a private investigator will add one more professional to the search.

- **Contact organizations which help parents locate missing children.**

There are many individuals, agencies, and organizations across the country which offer information and support for parents and help in finding missing children. Some are national in scope, some only state- or city-wide. Some are dedicated to finding children taken by parents, some to children abducted by strangers, some to runaways.

Since most of these groups are non-profit, and many of the people who dedicate their time and resources to them are volunteers, contact names and telephone numbers often change. You may need to make a number of calls and ask for referrals to find the help you need for your particular circumstances.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

1835 K Street, N.W.
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20006
Telephone: (202) 634-9821

Newly organized federal clearinghouse of information and technical assistance for parents of missing children, action groups and organizations, and

law enforcement professionals. Includes divisions on missing children, exploited children, and education, prevention, and public awareness.

Child Find, Inc.

P.O. Box 277
New Paltz, New York 12561
Telephone: (914) 255-1848

A national, non-profit network for locating missing children. Publishes periodic bulletin and sells identification kits and instructional material. Also maintains a toll-free hotline (1-800-431-5005) for children and spotters of missing children, and works cooperatively with a coast-to-coast network of law enforcement agencies, investigative resources, and other organizations.

Find Me, Inc.

P.O. Box 1612
LaGrange, Georgia 30241
Telephone: (404) 884-7419

Publishes 55-page ACTION booklet which includes good comprehensive resource list of helping organizations, as well as precaution checklists, lists of detectives, case histories, and other related information (older — teen and adult — missing, religious or cult disappearances, fingerprinting, computer listings, etc.)

National Youth Work Alliance

1346 Connecticut Avenue,
N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: (202) 785-0764

Provides information on runaways and runaway centers.

Bay Area Center for Victims of Child Stealing

1165 Meridian Avenue
Suite 112
San Jose, California 95125
Telephone: (408) 266-6005

Provides support, suggestions, referrals, hotlines, monthly meetings, and letter writing campaigns for parents of missing children. Also provides training and education for law enforcement agencies and the public.

Children's Rights of Florida, Inc.

P.O. Box 173
Pinellas Park, Florida 33565
Telephone: (813) 546-1593 —
National hotline
1-800-237-5200 — National
sighting hotline

Non-profit organization helps locate missing children. Offers 24-hour hotline, newsletters, counseling, referrals to professionals and other helping agencies, nationally distributed photo directory.

Children's Rights of New York, Inc.

19 Maple Avenue
Stony Brook, NY 11790
Telephone: (516) 751-7840

Promotes public education and awareness programs, provides counseling for parents of missing children and referrals to support groups and other resources.

Richard VenJohn is a practicing clinical psychologist and family therapist in St. Paul, Minn. He has conducted seminars on parenting and family life.



The following letters are in response to a mother's query in the June, 1984 Growing Parent about babies who seem to eat more than the typical child.

Pacifier ends meal for fast eater

My six-month-old, 20-pound son is also a voracious eater. He's very good, pleasant, and mellow most of the time. But feeding time presents a totally different situation.

I have to prepare all the food and set it up before I get him, since once I put on his bib and/or put him in his feeding chair, it's all over.

I was also worried about his rapid weight gain, though the pediatrician reassured me he was not overweight. He would consistently eat to the point of spitting up the excess, until I had to judge when to stop him myself.

He would be irate about this, but giving him a pacifier always would stop his crying until he could "feel" full, and also let him continue his pleasurable sucking.

Debbie Marino
Rocky Hill, CT

Cheerios a must for this mother

My son is also a big eater and has often been referred to as "Piglet."

I've never worried about his hearty appetite because he always has been an extremely active and busy child. Besides, it's easier to tell him "no more" than it would be to plead with him to eat his dinner!

Lynda Dennis
Stamford, CT

P.S. I never go anywhere without a baggie of Cheerios!

Snacks help curb appetite

I have a daughter who was also a hearty eater.

To keep her from being frantic at mealtimes and to help her eat slower, I made a habit of always having low-calorie snack foods available throughout the day. She is especially fond of raisins and apple slices. I've found that by letting her snack through the day, she doesn't get so hungry when she finally does sit down to eat. I also give her four smaller meals a day instead of three large ones.

Sympathetic

"Dear Growing Child" is a forum for our readers to share their personal thoughts, opinions, comments, and experiences. We welcome your responses to questions that appear periodically. The letters published do not necessarily represent the views of Growing Child.

All letters to the editor will be treated as having been submitted for publication. If you do not want your correspondence published, please specify this in your letter. Names withheld upon request. We reserve the right to edit for publication.

From the Editor



Nancy
Kleckner

Save the traditions!

Thanksgiving is almost upon us again and I've been thinking of some of the traditions associated with the holiday.

When I was a child, Thanksgiving was a special time because our family got together for a big dinner. My Grandmother Frantz and Uncle Charlie would come to our house, Grandma smelling like Tweed perfume and carrying a big brown basket. I wasn't much interested in the food she brought, but it was the traditional dishes she prepared that I now realize were an important part of our annual observance.

For example, Grandma made cranberry salad from scratch. That meant dark red cranberries and fruit that had been cleaned, diced up and mixed together into something beautiful.

My dad would always try to have a conversation with Uncle Charlie, who mostly grunted or nodded his head. My mother would apologize for something not being right (gravy too thin, meat too well-done), and we would sit down to eat.

While Uncle Charlie returned thanks, Kemo, the parakeet, would jump around in his cage, making as much noise as possible. My cousins and I thought this was hilarious and watched Uncle Charlie carefully to see if he was irritated by the parakeet's antics. He never seemed to notice.

As I grew up and took my place at the table, I became one of the grownups whose job it was to preserve and continue the traditions.

But the funny thing I found out is that those things we call "tradition" at our house are very homely and personal, not at all the kinds of things you read about "traditional" Thanksgiving or see on television.

Some of our traditions seem silly, but they are the things my nieces and nephews talk about year after year, the stories we tell each other and laugh about. Like the turkey that will not relinquish its frozen treasures.

Just because, once upon a time, I removed one instead of two packages, every year someone must ask if Aunt Nancy took out the giblets before the bird was roasted. Then, if the answer is yes, we can eat.

So, every year I counter with a vivid description of what it feels like to stick one's arm into a frozen, clammy bird at some ridiculously early hour of the morning. Which, by the way, is another tradition. We don't have to get up so early anymore to roast the turkey. But we still do it.

Many folks dread **any** holiday because they say they don't seem to get much from them. Experts tell us many of these feelings come from the fact that we expect too much, that we want everything to be perfect for those we love. Our hopes exceed reality.

As I started to plan this article, I realized that for each of us our traditions are unique, personal and very different from each other's. But to each of us, they're familiar and known and part of our individual heritage.

So, going into this holiday season, I'm going to try to keep my "hopes" more realistic and enjoy our set of traditions just the way they are. Those smiling, perfect families on daytime television are not my idea of a good time when I have real people to pass me the gravy . . . and laugh at my story about "cold turkey."

Hope your Thanksgiving is memorable.

Nancy Kleckner

Happy holidays: Hints for making this year's celebrations the best ever

"Tis the season to be jolly . . ."

Just about everybody loves the winter holiday season for its excitement, cheer, and warm, familiar traditions. Yet many people are tripped up every year by the twin hazards of too much and too little: too much expectation, too much preparation, too much activity; too little time, too little energy, too little money.

Wearing yourself out, mentally or physically, doesn't contribute to a great holiday season for you or your family. So, in the spirit of the season, we offer these tips for making sure your holidays are indeed jolly.

- **Be realistic.** Trying to make everything perfect just sets you up for disappointment. The gap between our hopes, our memories of "how it used to be" and the actuality of short tempers and tight budgets is often very wide.

Take a minute to think about your expectations for the holidays. What do you want the season to mean to you and your family? Will your children enjoy it more if they get a whole lot of expensive presents on one day from a tired and grouchy parent? Or will they have fond memories of simple activities and rituals — baking cookies, making decora-

tions, reading stories — with a relaxed and pleasant you?

- **Keep on schedule.** Visitors, delayed meals and bedtimes, parties and shopping can turn schedules upside-down, but it's important to try to stay as regular as possible. Young children thrive on routine. When they get wound up, the excitement can make them short-tempered and unpredictable. It's important to be able to recognize the danger signals and slow things down before the situation explodes into a full-scale drama.

- **Don't overspend.** To babies, Christmas is just another day. Crinkly wrapping paper, boxes, and bright ribbons are the best presents for them.

Toddlers will usually be pleased with whatever you give them, and it doesn't have to be expensive to be fun.

Older children are more likely to have firm ideas about what they want, and there's no reason you can't give it to them — within reason. But whatever their age, children need love, security, and a sense of family much more than they need any new play-

thing. If money is tight around your house, use your imagination and creativity to observe rituals, make gifts, or give promises (a picnic, a special breakfast, a visit to the zoo.) Children will remember and treasure these long after the designer clothes are outgrown and the "in" product has faded into oblivion.

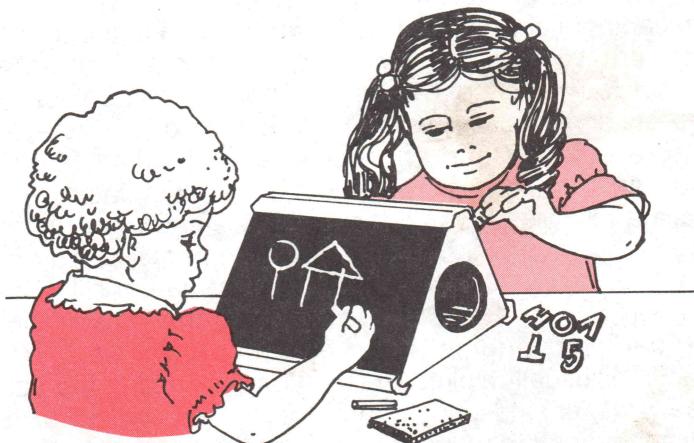
- **Play it by ear.** If at any time, things don't seem to be going right, don't be afraid to abandon plans and try another activity. Nothing says you **have** to do things any certain way.

- **Plan ahead.** You've only got a limited amount of money, energy, and time. Make good choices about how to use them. Some basic holiday time tips:

Make food ahead and freeze it (cookies to decorate later, casseroles to heat up for quick family dinners).

Write a few cards a day starting November 15, even if you don't have time. By the middle of December, they'll all be done.

Begin planning now for next year. Keep a list of presents people said they liked, activities you read about you'd like to try.



Small rituals become favorite family traditions

Children love ritual, ceremony, pomp and circumstance, and doing things the same way over and over. The beauty of the American holiday season is that it embraces customs from the far corners of the world, with every ethnic group and religion making its own contribution. Each family develops its own traditions, large and small. You can choose traditions to observe that are as old as time, or as new and spontaneous as a child's wonder. Here are a few old favorites for before, during, and after the "big day."

• **Advent calendar.** The advent calendar originated in Germany. It is usually a picture of a house or winter landscape with windows that open to reveal pictures or poems or pieces of candy or small presents. Each day, the children are allowed to open one window. If there are several children in the family, the privilege traditionally rotates from one to another, usually with great confusion as everyone wants it to be his or her turn each time.

The advent calendar is a good way of visually measuring "how many" days are left until the big day. So is a chain made of wrapping paper, ribbons, or last year's cut-up Christmas cards.

• **Advent wreath, the festival of lights.** The advent wreath is of Lutheran origin. It is an evergreen wreath with four candles set in holders attached to it. One candle is lighted each week beginning four Sundays before Christmas.

The Festival of Lights, or the lighting of the Menorah candles for eight nights of Hannukah, celebrates the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem. The ceremony of lighting the candles for the advent wreath or the Menorah provides a good opportunity to discuss the family's religious beliefs.

• **Special activities and family customs.** Where presents are hidden and when they are opened; special times for reading holiday stories, singing carols, visiting, baking cookies, making ornaments; going to

church, pageants, the ballet or symphony; touring the neighborhood to look at lights or the city tree or the department store Santa—all these things are possibilities for tradition. They don't cost much money, and they can be expanded to include friends and strangers as well as family.

• **Bird's tree.** There's a natural let-down after the holidays when all the excitement is over. The Scandinavian custom of a bird's tree reminds us that the love and plenty of the season should be shared with all living things to insure that the coming year will be a prosperous one. Originally, a sheaf of grain or seed or a loaf of bread was put outside for the birds. Some families "plant" their Christmas trees outside with popcorn strings, cranberries, and peanut butter balls attached. The sight and sound of the activity at the bird's tree should help cure post-holiday blues and give everyone hope that there is indeed life after the holiday season.

A gift for the grandparent with everything

By Marilyn Pribus

Finding a good present for a grandparent is often nearly impossible. You don't know if Grandpa's read the latest best-seller, or if Grandma is still a size 12.

Some years ago when my family was stationed overseas we found a solution. For pennies a day we discovered a "gift" that was my Dad's delight and has turned into a family tradition.

We bought a supply of already-stamped postcards from the post office, addressed them in advance (gummed address labels make this easier) and

mailed them one at a time. At first we mailed one every day for a month. Somewhere along the way, the gift was expanded to a card for each year of my Dad's age. Then my mother decided she'd rather have daily cards, too—much more special than a new housecoat or letter paper.

When we first started sending the cards, the boys were too young to spell their names correctly all the time, but they could draw pictures of their activities and dictate messages. Now, as teenagers, they take turns with my husband and me writing the greetings. We've learned that

the little things that don't find their way into letters do appear on the cards: sighting the first robin, an "A" on a school test, a good movie we've seen, or just "I love you."

This gift is particularly suitable for anyone who lives alone and watches for the mailman every day—even someone in the same town. It is much more an investment of time and thought than of money. But after all, isn't that what gifts (and love) are all about?

Marilyn Pribus is a teacher, a writer, and a paraprofessional in the mental health field.

Wise words on disciplining preschoolers: Be consistent

By Joan Wester Anderson

A wise friend set me on a worthwhile path to discipline many years ago, and I will always be grateful for his counsel.

"If you learn nothing else about raising your children," he told me, "learn to be consistent. Don't ever issue a warning or make a promise if you are too tired or distracted to follow through on it. But when you do tell the children to hang up their coats or stop throwing oranges out the window, be sure that they obey."

Preschoolers . . . seem much happier when guidelines and limits are firm and reliable.

His advice was perfect for an inexperienced mother like me. And I discovered that it worked wonders, bringing order and a sense of contentment into our household. Our preschoolers seemed much happier when guidelines and limits were firm and reliable. Understanding what was expected of them gave them a sense of security; knowing that Mom would not let them hurt themselves or others helped them cope in situations that might have gotten out of hand. Realizing that what was true yesterday would also be true tomorrow allowed them to develop comfortably in a predictable environment.

Think first

My first "be consistent" task was to learn to stop for a moment and *think*, rather than plunge too

hastily into a situation and regret it later. Did I have the energy to follow through on the request that the children pick up their toys? If not, better to say nothing than allow them to ignore my instructions. If they didn't behave on an outing, what was my alternative? Was I prepared to act on it?

This "pausing" technique helped me determine what was worth making an issue over, and what was not all that important. I found that I was giving the children fewer instructions, but when I did speak, they listened.

"My mom only gives one warning," our four-year-old once told a playmate. "If you throw sand again, she'll send you home." The visitor, not used to such treatment, tossed another handful, and I promptly dismissed him from our yard. I'll never forget the look of satisfaction on my son's face. Good old reliable Mom had come through again.

Constructive punishments

Besides being consistent about behavior, I also had to decide what form of punishment should be used when rules were broken. Few parents can stagger through the preschool years without administering an occasional spanking, and I was no exception. But I looked for more constructive ways of dealing with unruly tots.

Since our preschool set usually enjoyed one another's company, isolation seemed a natural penalty for someone who disturbed the peace. But not in his bedroom—too many interesting distractions there! Instead, I would place the small offender in a hallway or other equally boring spot, set the kitchen timer, and go on with my work. When the buzzer rang, our chastised one could then rejoin the group.

I also tried to make punishment the natural consequence of the action, making sure that the

Don't ever issue a warning or make a promise if you are too tired or distracted to follow through on it. But when you do tell the children to stop throwing oranges out the window, be sure they obey.

children knew what the results would be. If a pair quarreled loudly over a television program, I simply turned off the set. If they wouldn't behave in the car, I pulled over to the side of the road, refusing to go any farther until the mischief stopped. If our preschoolers were cooperative in the supermarket, they were allowed to choose a piece of fruit to bring home, but if someone was naughty, the fruit was forfeited.

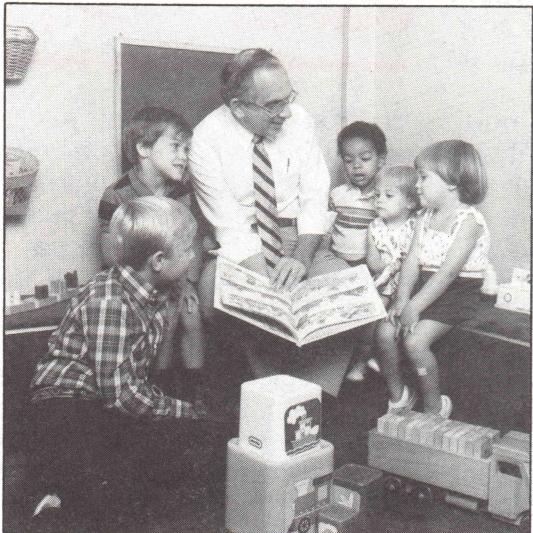
Consistency pays off

I well remember the day our three-year-old had a tantrum in the checkout line because she wasn't getting her banana; it was embarrassing for me, and I'm sure the onlookers thought we were a terrible family. But the "be consistent" rule paid off. Our daughter learned that I meant what I said, and she behaved well on subsequent shopping trips.

Obviously, it was impossible to arrive at the perfect solution for every problem. But by emphasizing the positives — giving more praise than blame — and acting with decisiveness when the situation called for it, we eliminated much of the arguing and frustration the preschool years can bring. A framework of consistency, we discovered, not only builds trust, but also provides security and a relaxed environment for both parent and child.

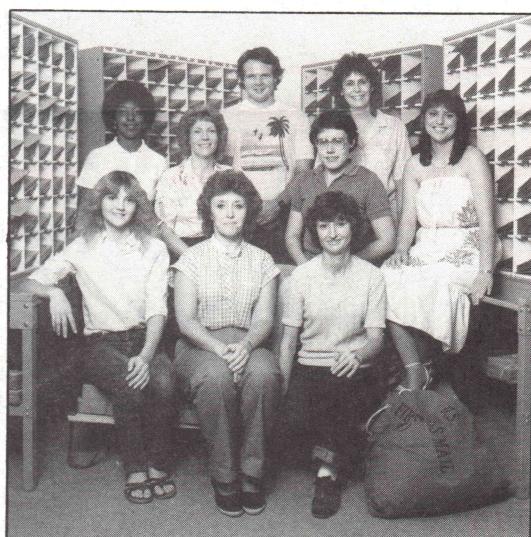
From all of us to all of you: Happy holidays and best wishes for a most happy and prosperous New Year!

President, Dennis D. Dunn and friends



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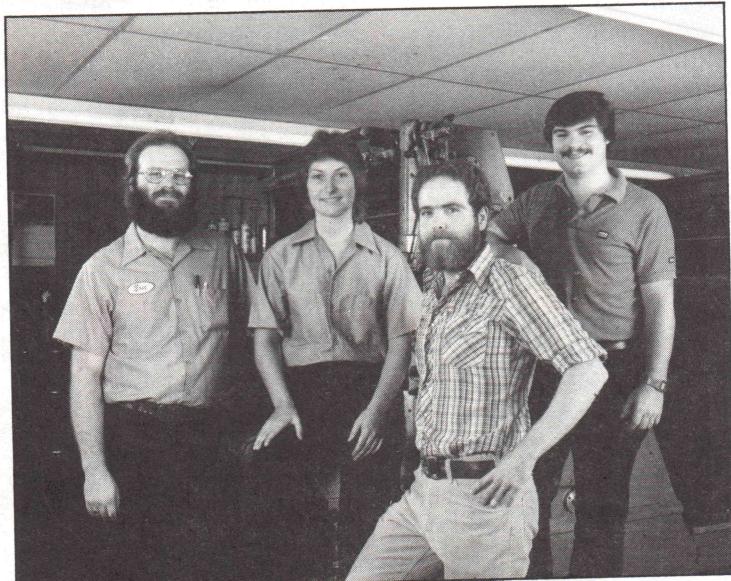
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Choose children's toys with an eye to age, skills, interest, need

By Lisa Walton

Children love to play — they enjoy it just as adults enjoy golfing, reading, or cooking.

But playing is not just fun. It also helps children develop their minds, bodies, and personalities. Therefore, the toys you select for your child should develop his skills, expand his horizons, and complement his environment, as well as appeal to his sense of fun.

Here are some guidelines for choosing toys wisely, based on age and developmental needs of youngsters within specific age groups. Many of these toys can be made from household items, or from inexpensive materials purchased in a variety store.



Infants

Everything an infant encounters is a new experience. From these encounters he learns about himself and the world around him. This learning is the infant's form of play.

One of the first things babies do is become aware of their bodies. They need toys to build physical skills — playthings to hold, look at, and listen to. There should be a variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and materials to stimulate the senses of touch, sight, sound, and smell. These might include:

- Safe toys to mouth and teethe on
- Toys to grasp and squeeze
- Rattles
- Clutch ball
- Toys for the bath
- Small plastic cups that nest and stack
- A "busy box"
- Plastic bowls
- An unbreakable mirror
- A cloth book
- Floor toys that encourage crawling



One-year-olds

This is the age of new mobility and independence. One-year-olds are separate individuals, impatient to learn and find out "why." They're curious adventurers, yet they aren't ready for fantasy or imagination. They need toys that deal with the real world.

This is the ever-exploring "pots and pans" age. One-year-olds need toys to take apart and put together, parts to screw and unscrew, put on and take off, throw and drop, stack and unstack. For example:

- Pull and push toys
- Small lightweight blocks
- Crayons
- A soft, safe ball
- Sand and water toys
- Pop beads
- Plastic links
- A toy drum or safe pounding toy
- A first shape-sorter
- A first puzzle
- Toys to push on the floor when crawling
- Imitation toys such as a telephone or housekeeping toys
- Dolls

Two-year-olds

Two-year-olds are developing their minds and bodies, so they need challenging toys for learning. They need toys to build large and small muscles, to teach concepts like in, out, over, under, up, down. Two-year-olds have gone from simple imitation to actual make-believe play. Give them:

- Stringing beads
- Fingerpaint
- Rhythm instruments
- A riding toy
- A pull wagon
- A rocking horse
- Toys to teach dressing skills
- A chalkboard and chalk
- A basic train
- Simple object puzzles
- A small table and chair set





Three-year-olds

The third year holds a lot of changes. Children go from simply knowing something to understanding it. Their minds are sharper and they are better coordinated physically. They need toys to complement these skills. Threes should have toys for outdoor as well as indoor play, and items that require them to "think" about what they are doing. Try:

- Large blocks, block play accessories, and construction toys
- Puppets
- Board games and games that involve problem-solving
- Toys that teach colors, sizes, shapes, and math concepts
- Three-dimensional puzzles and games
- A see-saw
- A teach-and-play clock
- A tricycle

Four-year-olds

If not already in preschool, four-year-olds are close to starting school. They need toys to prepare them for kindergarten. These are items with more abstract concepts, ones that appeal to specific tastes and

interests, and playthings that inspire creativity and imagination. For example:

- Activities for reading, writing, and number concepts
- Art kits
- Construction toys
- A hop-scotch board
- Games that involve color, shape, and size matching
- Board games
- A scrapbook to make and keep
- A small sled
- More "complex" sand and water toys



Five-year-olds

Five-year-olds are eager to learn. They need toys that let them use their own physical and mental talents, school-readiness items, and their own personal belongings — whether they be toys, clothing, or possessions. Five-year-olds like:

- Sport toys such as a softball and bat, kickball, roller skates or bicycle (training wheels, too)
- Play settings with miniature characters and objects
- Clay
- Woodworking materials
- Writing paper and markers
- Toys to start special "collections"
- A puppet theatre
- Gardening toys
- A jump rope
- A first jigsaw puzzle
- Personal wallet, purse, brush, and comb
- A tape recorder

All ages

All children, regardless of age, need playthings to build physical, mental, language, emotional, and social skills. Some toys will appeal to children of all ages. These include music-related items, plush toys, and books.

For children two years and up, a well-rounded toy selection should also include playthings from each of the following groups:

- Pretend/dress-up play
- Arts and crafts
- Blocks
- Science and nature
- Outdoor toys
- Puzzles, games, and construction toys

As children grow, they are ready, willing and able to learn. They need toys to be able to practice their ever-developing skills. Always remember when choosing toys that all playthings need to meet strict safety standards and they should be versatile, stimulating, age-appropriate, and actively involve the child. And of course, be sure they are fun!

Lisa Walton has a BS degree in Child Development and Family Studies from Purdue University. She is involved in the evaluation and selection of toys for Growing Child catalogs.

The Back Page

One more time

You have nine more presents to purchase and wrap, six dozen cookies to bake by morning and the neighbors are arriving at 6:00 for a party. In the midst of the chaotic holiday season it is easy to let caution slip.

The following bits of advice are repeated in various newsletters and magazines every year, but because we care about our readers and their children, we offer this refresher course.

Trimming the tree

Before buying a Christmas tree, bounce it on the ground to insure the needles are not ready to fall off. Be sure and keep the tree watered. A dry tree can be a serious fire hazard. Keep the tree away from television sets, heaters and fireplaces. You may find it easier to place the tree in the playpen instead of constantly monitoring baby's movements.

Make certain all lights have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label of safety. Buy the appropriate lights for the place you intend to use them, indoor or outdoor. Do not use lights stronger than recommended — they can melt the tree and eventually burn it. Unplug lights when you go to bed or leave the house.

Candles should be firmly held in place by a sturdy holder. Make sure the flame isn't near curtains, paper decorations, or other flammable materials. As with tree lights, make sure candles are not burning when the family goes to bed or leaves the house.

Gifts and guests

Gifts such as perfume, bath oil beads and cosmetics should be kept out of the reach of young children who might be tempted to eat them.

Visitors purses or luggage containing makeup, medicines and other potentially harmful items should also be kept away from children.

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Advice for Santa Claus

When purchasing toys for babies, make sure there are no:

- small parts to break off;
- sharp corners or points;
- toxic paints;
- potential dangers even if a toy is not played with exactly as the manufacturer intended.

Be sure to keep toys and games for older children away from younger ones.

Deck the halls with boughs of holly?

Several common holiday plants can produce painful effects if ingested by a child. Poinsettias may cause vomiting and gastrointestinal bleeding. Very dangerous are the berries found on holly, mistletoe and Jerusalem cherry plants. If you suspect your child has swallowed the leaves or berries of one of these plants — or any other harmful substance — contact your nearest poison control center.

They are cute, but . . .

The Animal Protection Institute of America suggests that Christmas day is not a good time to introduce a new puppy or kitten to a child. If you wish to give a pet as a gift the organization recommends bringing the animal into the home well before or after the holidays. Christmas day, with all the excitement and confusion, can be too stressful for a puppy or kitten — and a child.

Many animals like to chew and can swallow or even choke on loose ribbons, wrapping paper, tinsel and other decorations. Young animals, in particular, love to hide under wrapping paper and decorations. Every year many are stepped on and injured.

Keep these tips in mind and have a safe, enjoyable holiday.

